

**INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE – BEMIDJI AREA  
2020 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST OF THE YEAR  
LT FRANCIS PARK**

**Introduction:**

The 2020 Bemidji Area Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) of the Year is LT Francis Park, REHS. LT Park is recognized for leadership, dedicated service, innovative practice and professionalism that substantially elevated environmental health services to the Bemidji Area Tribes. He has sustained quality performance throughout the year and most noteworthy has been his dedication to expanding the Area Healthy Homes Program, development and delivery of virtual training, Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP) Surface Disinfection Assessments and service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Professionalism:**

LT Park is a Sr. Field Environmental Health Officer (O-4 billet) for the Rhinelander District. He is responsible for leading, administering and implementing environmental health services to three tribes (three person year workload) in Northern Wisconsin.

He quickly established himself as a valuable employee by working with key Area and District programs, assuming leadership roles and providing new employees with orientation and cross training. LT Park is a mentor to a Recent Graduate Pathway, EHS and professionally registered, REHS with the Nation Environmental Health Association. He is a true asset to the BAIHS, DEHS program and heavily relied upon for his general environmental health competencies.

**Special Accomplishments:**

***Healthy Homes Program:*** LT Park has brought tremendous leadership and dedication to a collateral duty assignment as the Bemidji Area Healthy Homes Coordinator. This involved the management and delivery of healthy homes services to ***31 tribes across our service region***. This position was vacant for an extended time, limiting program growth and service delivery. LT Park's work has been instrumental in extending ***\$100,000*** in annual funding by further developing the program, meeting with the funding agency and ensuring the delivery of prioritized services.

- LT Park quickly familiarized himself with the Inter Agency Agreement, the standards and practices of tribal healthy homes, and completed the Indoor Air Quality in Tribal Communities training to become more proficient at healthy homes activities.
- LT Park re-established connection with all 31 tribes by developing a healthy homes needs assessment that resulted in 58% of the tribes responding. The survey results indicated a need for tribal healthy home programs, IAQ assessment training, lead assessments, bed bug remediation policies, and drug home remediation policies and procedures. This was used to guide and prioritize healthy home related services.

***Lead Assessment Program:*** LT Park developed a Tribal School and Head Start Lead Assessment Program for the 31 BAO Tribes by partnering with the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan (ITCM), Great Lakes Tribal Epidemiology Center (GLITC), Region V EPA, and the Tribal Head Start Programs in the Bemidji Service Area. LT Park identified the funding source and brought the partners together for program planning, technical implementation and assisted in writing the proposal. The ITCM and GLITC received funding in the amount of ***\$200,000***.

**COVID-19 Response:** While leading and managing area-wide projects, LT Park delivered on his regular duties by assisting the Bemidji Area with COVID-19 related activities. His dedicated service was at a time when travel was deemed hazardous duty and only acceptable when mission critical. He was responsible for completing head start and healthcare guidance documents, COVID-19 operational safety plan reviews for 5 casinos, 3 head starts, 1 school, 3 day cares, and onsite assessments at 3 clinics and 5 casinos. In addition, he completed a 30 day deployment to assist the Navajo Nation with safe drinking water and had a key role in the early and efficient distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine to all of the Tribes in the Bemidji Area

### **Innovation:**

**Virtual Training:** LT Park led the Bemidji Area DEHS efforts to develop and deliver virtual head start health and safety training at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic did not allow for safe in-person learning. This included a coordinated effort with the Phoenix Area on the use of video teleconference to provide a one day recorded training for head start staff. The training was scheduled, staff organized, and the video and teleconference set up and tested. The training was held and 123 staff attended virtually. Comments about the training were overwhelmingly positive and this was presented at a head start director's meeting as the way future trainings would be held. ***This format was easier for the DEHS and Area Head Starts to organize and schedule, it required only one training, it could be attended by all tribal staff, easily allowed for multiple presenters from our Area and reduced staff travel time to various remote locations.*** At the request of the head start programs, these recorded trainings were made available for later use and orientation of new staff. This innovative thinking and best practice approach by LT Park not only makes our program more efficient, it also increased the efficiency and productivity for the Head Start Programs while still ensuring they meet all requirements of the Head Start Performance Standards.

**Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP) Surface Disinfection Assessments:** LT Park was instrumental to institutionalizing adenosine triphosphate (ATP) surface disinfection assessments across the Bemidji Service Region. ATP is an enzyme that is present in all living cells. Testing a surface for the presence of ATP detects the amount of organic matter that remains after cleaning an environmental surface and can determine the effectiveness of an infection control program and housekeeping procedures. LT Park presented this technology and proposed focused assessment by the DEHS team. His leadership was evident in the way it was presented, guidance documents provided, sample reports and his evaluation measures. The team quickly adopted and implemented the resources needed to provide these assessments in health care environments. This service is requested and valued as we partner with healthcare staff to reduce surface contamination and the risks of disease spread.

### **Summary:**

LT Francis Park has exemplified dedication, professionalism, leadership and mentoring as a Sr. Field Environmental Health Officer. His attention to quality services while expanding the Healthy Homes Program, ATP surface disinfection assessments, virtual training and COVID-19 response has elevated the DEHS program. The BAIHS, DEHS program proudly recognizes LT Francis Park as our 2020 Environmental Specialist of the Year with nomination to the IHS EHS of the year.